



# Minnesota Spirit



## SHOWCASING THE SPIRIT OF AGENCY PARTNERSHIP AND VETERAN SUCCESS STORIES

### SPOTLIGHT ON PARTNERSHIP

Ron Henke, Director, St. Paul VA Regional Office, welcomed 70 participants to the 2000 VA and Disabled Veteran Outreach Program and Local Veteran Employment Representative Conference held at the Regal Hotel, Minneapolis, on November 27-28, 2000.



Jim Warnest – Employment Programs & Mike Graham DVET

The focus on the conference was reinforcing the combined efforts of **PARTNERS IN PLACEMENT** theme and finding more efficient methods to increase employment opportunities for veterans with disabilities in Minnesota.

Topics covered in general and concurrent sessions were:

- Memorandum of Understanding
- VA National goals and measurement of outcomes
- VA On the Job Training (OJT), Apprenticeships, Federal Unpaid Work Experience, and Special Employer Incentives.
- Chapter 31 Case Management
- Homeless Veterans Programs.



Ronald Henke welcomes conference Participants

Notable highlights of the Conference were: a Luncheon Honoring Bernie Melter, retiring Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, and Jesse Ventura, Governor, reading Proclamation of Bernie Melter Day at the luncheon.

### GOVERNOR VENTURA HONORS BERNIE MELTER

#### Exerts From Governor Ventura's Remarks:

Whereas: Your military service to your country as a United States Marine

Whereas: Your service as a County Veterans Service Officer

Whereas: Your never tiring dedication to the aid of veterans as Commissioner Veterans Affairs

Whereas: You have provided a decade of unparalleled devotion to the concept of making government more responsive and less costly

Therefore, the Honorable Bernie Melter is a true Minnesota Hero and I declare today, November 28th, 2000, Bernie Melter Day.



#### Special points of interest:

- St. Paul VA Regional Office Director welcomes training partnership participants.
- Governor Jesse Ventura honors retiring Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, Bernie Melter.
- Introducing our Editors.
- How you may submit ideas or stories of about your successful employment or rehabilitation efforts.

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## **EDITORIAL SECTION**

*Author: RJ Roundtree*

The Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment staff and the Minnesota WorkForce Centers welcome you to the first issue of our quarterly newsletter, **Minnesota Spirit**. The purpose of this newsletter is the following:

- To document and illustrate the working partnership of VA Vocational Rehabilitation, Minnesota WorkForce Centers, VA Medical Centers/Clinics, Vet Centers, training facilities, employers, vendors, and Minnesota veterans with disabilities.
- Illustrate success stories of veterans benefiting from vocational rehabilitation, employment, medical, and independent living services.
- Identify and recognize employers and employment trends within Minnesota, which may impact current and future employment opportunities for veterans with disabilities.
- Provide a forum for discussion, training, and shared ideas to

improve more efficient delivery of vocational rehabilitation, employment, and independent living services.

### **Who has provided Support for this Project?**

Ron Henke, Director, St. Paul VA Regional Office, initiated and encouraged the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Division to develop a local newsletter as a showcase for our combined efforts to increase employment opportunities for Minnesota's disabled veterans. His support has included allocation of staff time and financial resources for the newsletter development, preparation, and publication.

The editors of the **Minnesota Spirit Newsletter** sincerely thank Mr. Henke for his support to this project. We look forward to a long productive publication schedule that will increase the quality of our employment services and opportunities to serve Minnesota's disabled veterans.

### **How can you help?**

We do not expect you to be an

Ernest Hemingway or creative writer. That is not our expectation! What we would encourage is that you contact any of the editors listed below on potential stories of successful job placement, new employers in your labor market, unique case management intervention, community activities, or partnership efforts with other agencies or organizations.

You may fax, telephone, or E-mail one of our editors below. We will contact you regarding the information, confirm receipt, and discuss follow up on an article. You do not need to write the article! That is our job! We just want to hear from you and what you think is an illustration of our partnership, success story, or labor market trend.

**The deadline for ideas or stories for the next issue is MARCH 15, 2001.**

## **EDITOR'S NOTES: If you have any articles you would like to have published, please send them to one of the following people below.**

**The deadline for ideas or stories for the next issue is: MARCH 15, 2001**

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## **ST. PAUL VA REGIONAL OFFICE WELCOMES NEW VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT COUNSELOR**

*By RJ Roundtree*

Cynthia Oswald joined the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Division at the St. Paul VA Regional Office in July 2000. She transferred to VA from the Darnall Army Community Hospital, Fort Hood, Texas, where she was a Counseling Psychologist with the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program.

Cindy (as she prefers to be called) is quickly learning about VA Vocational Rehabilitation's entitlement determinations, case management, job placement, and independent living programs. She's been visiting local training facilities, Minnesota WorkForce

Center offices, and attempting to stay warm all at the same time!!! You can tell you are in Cindy's office because it has the environment of a greenhouse!!! Just kidding, she is becoming acclimated to the Minnesota winter!

She has a graduate degree in Counseling Psychology from the University of Central Texas and has completed numerous advanced clinical classes and training seminars in counseling and addictions.

Cindy is an Army veteran and served from 1976 to 1979 as an Administrative Specialist and Office Manager. We certainly can use her skills in our office!!!



**Cindy counsels Veteran**

The editors of the Minnesota Spirit Newsletter look forward to Cindy's counseling and case management efforts in assisting Minnesota's disabled veterans in reaching their employment or independent living goals.

## **"CHOICES" CAREER PROGRAM ASSISTS VA COUNSELORS AND VETERANS IN DEVELOPING REHAB PLANS**

*By RJ Roundtree*

One of the primary tasks for a VA Counselor and the disabled veteran is developing a realistic rehabilitation or occupational plan that will lead to suitable employment. This is critical to the establishment of a foundation of "success" and future employment opportunities for disabled veterans. The VA Counselor and veterans use various tools to assist in identifying a realistic goals such as: vocational testing, labor market information, training facility visits, labor market surveys, and career exploration.

Minnesota WorkForce Center offices have an excellent tool that assists veterans and VA

Counselors in developing rehabilitation plans: Choices CT. Choices CT gives adults in career transition new ways to consider their experiences and to relate their transferable skills, interests, and priorities to career and education options.

Choices CT has the following highlights:

- Roadmap for Career Planning
- Skills and Interests Assessments
- Work history
- Occupations

VA Counselors are encouraged to refer their Chapter 31 participants to local Minnesota WorkForce Center offices so they may assist the veteran with

disabilities in completing all components of Choices CT. The information then may be printed with copies to the veteran and VA Counselor, which could be available for the next scheduled counseling appointment.



**Tree visits client at Vet Center**

**"There are no great men just great challenges which ordinary men out of necessity, are forced by circumstances to meet" – Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey**



## **SEVENTY-THREE YEARS YOUNG DISABLED VETERAN ACHIEVES INDEPENDENT LIVING GOALS**

*By Robert Roundtree*

Robert Sattler, a 73-year-old veteran, who was discharged from active duty with the US Navy in 1948, has successfully completed an independent living program. Robert first filed his application in February 2000, and during his first initial interview stated, "I am not sure what the VA can do for me after all these years."

His counselor reviewed Bob's need, including any independent living areas where he could potentially benefit from specialized intervention services. Bob reported to his Counselor that he had been a regular volunteer with the Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Tax Preparation Assistance program. Although Bob enjoyed getting out of the house to assist other senior citizens with tax preparation, he realized that many of the tax laws and forms were now

available on the Internet. Bob didn't have a computer and did not have the skills to use one for his volunteer activities.



**Tree shares a laugh with Sattler**

VA assisted Bob by providing training in computer software at Minneapolis Rehabilitation Center followed by installation of computer hardware & software recommended by his computer instructors. He has completed initial computer skills training at Minneapolis. Bob needed more one-on-one training and was provided in-home training by the

same Minneapolis Rehabilitation Center instructors to assure that he had the necessary familiarity and the skills to use the equipment for his volunteer activities.

The VA's Independent Living Program provided computer technology and training to Bob Sattler, which reduced his social isolation and gave him the opportunity to continue in his volunteer position assisting other senior citizens in preparation and submittal of Federal and State Taxes. His volunteer efforts help him remain current in tax preparation, provide a basis for volunteer work, and helps his fellow senior citizens in his local community.

Congratulations, Bob! We commend your determination to volunteer and stay active in your community.

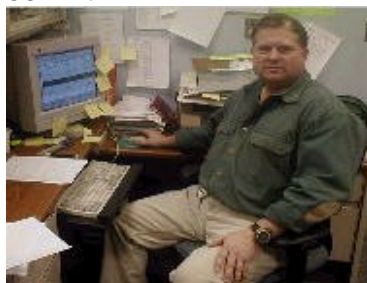
## **VAMC EMPLOYEE AND REHAB TRAINEE**

*By Robert Roundtree*

Ken Parsley, a U.S. Marine Corps and Gulf War veteran, has been sponsored by VA Vocational Rehabilitation for college level training at Normandale Community College, Bloomington, Minnesota. He has been making excellent progress toward completion of his academic requirements and preparing him for transfer to the University of Minnesota. VA staff recently visited him at his employer, Minneapolis VA Medical Center, to interview him about his impressions of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the quality of services he has received over the last 2 years.

We visited Ken at the Release of Information Office, Minneapolis VA Medical Center, where he has been employed since 1993. Ken reports he is able to maintain his

current job while attending the required classes at Normandale Community College by focusing his energies on reaching his long term goals: College graduation and a career with VA!



**Ken Parsley sitting at his desk**

Ken was very complimentary to both VA Vocational Rehabilitation and his employer, the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. His employer is very accommodating to his academic goals. Although his department has been working short staffed, Ken feels VA is a great place to work and he enjoys

organizing and abstracting the needed medical records. As a veteran himself, Ken wants to make sure each veteran has complete medical records that are available when claims or medical care necessitates a need for a full review of healthcare records.

We want to thank Ken for his efforts to assure that information is available when needed to process a veteran's or an agency's request for medical records. He is very helpful to Vocational Rehabilitation process by expediting requests for records that will assure disabled veterans filing for vocational rehabilitation benefits receive a professional and timely review of their applications.

Thanks, Ken! You are a real "partner" in helping disabled veterans participate in vocational rehabilitation and independent living services.

## SCOTT SILVEY'S EMPLOYMENT PLAN

Ed Keyser, VA Counseling Psychologist, and Terry Lang, DVOP, visited Scott Silvey, owner of Able Printing in St. Cloud, Minnesota, to interview him about his experience with VA's Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Scott met us at his company location and discussed his company's products, services, and how VA and the Small Business Administration assisted him in reaching his self-employment goals.

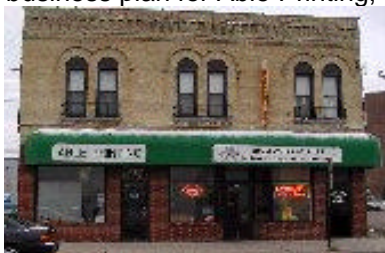


**Scott Silvey at his workstation**

Scott thanked Fred Anderson, former VA Counselor, for motivating him to apply for vocational rehabilitation. He began formal academic training at St. Cloud Vocational Technical College in Sales Management, but stated he always wanted to own his own business. Scott's disability limitations necessitated searching for a position which would allow flexibility in scheduling his work assignments. He had a long-term interest in self-employment and saw that as a means to provide flexibility, stay within his

disability limitations, and generate income for his family.

Scott began his research and attended seminars held with the Small Business Administration and the Minnesota Small Business Development Centers. He followed guidance and suggestions from both VA Counselors and Small Business Development Center staff. He received assistance in areas of developing a business plan and identification of financial resources to implement his business goal. He obtained funding from the VA for equipment and a SBA guaranteed loan for implementation of his business plan for Able Printing, Inc.



**Able Printing**

John Sparling of the Small Business Development Center at Pine City Technical College stated for this article that "Scott is a true success and demonstrates how VA and the SBA work together to assist disabled veterans in achieving business ownership."

Able Printing provides a wide

range of printing products, from business cards, brochures, company forms, letterhead, tickets, and coupons. Scott stated that his primary product is "Service to St. Cloud businesses. I make deliveries and follow up to see that the customer is satisfied."



**Scott & Ed Keyser – VA Counselor**

Ed Keyser asked how he picked the name Able Printing. Scott did not hesitate in his response, but spoke proudly: "It is first in the telephone book and it reflects a positive statement of ability and not disability."

Scott stated he would strongly recommend the VA and SBA programs to other veterans. In addition, he wanted to thank the St. Cloud VA Medical Center for his medical treatment and the care he received while he was in formal academic training and during the start up of his business.

The VA Vocational Rehabilitation staff congratulates Scott on his success and look forward to continued growth in the St. Cloud community!

## INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT MINNESOTA

**When did Minnesota gain Statehood?**

Minnesota became the thirty-second member of the Nation on November 11, 1858.

Opposition came from both North and South. As the Minnesota question was being considered it was caught up in the Kansas problem, which had plagued Congress intermittently since the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

**How did Minnesota get its name?**

The longest tributary to the Mississippi is the Minnesota River, which drains much of southern Minnesota and runs in a rough V from Big Stone Lake on the South Dakota border to its juncture with the Mississippi several miles below St. Anthony Falls. The French called it St. Pierre's River; British and early Americans, St. Peter's. The Dakota Indians, however, had

a more descriptive name, "Minnesota," whose literal translation is whitish water. Because of the silt it carries, the stream has a cloudy appearance. Missionaries translated the name as "somewhat clouded water," which prompted some historians to interpret that romantically to mean "sky-tinted water."

\*Exerts taken from Minnesota a History by William E. Lass

**Those who expect to reap the blessings of Liberty must undergo the fatigues of supporting it" – Thomas Paine**

## FOUR DOZEN WAYS TO STAY UNEMPLOYED

National Veterans' Training Institute:

This page was adapted from materials presented at a National Veterans Training Institute in Denver, Colorado. New York University lists the following reasons most frequently given by employers for turning down job applications. This information is based on reports from large companies. If you're out to land a job, take an inventory of yourself in relation to these reasons. If you still have a stretch of schooling ahead, this will give you time to work on eliminating any of the following traits that may hinder you in your employment future. As you read the below reasons for rejection, ask yourself, "How would I rate in relation to each?"

1. Poor personal appearance
2. Overbearing, over aggressive, conceited, superiority complex, a "know-it-all"
3. Inability to express themselves clearly, poor voice, diction, grammar
4. Lack of planning for career, no goals
5. Lack of interest and enthusiasm, indifference
6. Lack of confidence and poise, nervous
7. Failure to participate in activities
8. Overemphasizes money, only interested in the best financial offer
9. Poor scholastic record - barely got by
10. Unwilling to start at the bottom - expects too much too soon
11. Makes excuses, evasive, hedges on unfavorable factors in record
12. Lack of tact
13. Lack of maturity
14. Lack of courtesy, ill mannered
15. Condemnation of past employers
16. Lack of social understanding
17. Marked dislike for schoolwork
18. Lack of vitality
19. Fails to make eye contact with interviewer
20. Limp, fishy handshake
21. Indecision
22. Unhappy married life
23. Friction with parents
24. Sloppy application, left blanks
25. Merely shopping around
26. Wants only short-term employment
27. Little sense of humor
28. Lack of knowledge in field of specialization
29. Parents make decisions for him/her
30. No interest in company or in industry
31. Emphasis on who they know
32. Unwillingness to relocate for job
33. Cynical
34. Low moral standards
35. Lazy
36. Intolerant, strong prejudices
37. Narrow interests
38. Handles personal finances poorly
39. No interest in community or related activities
40. Inability to take criticism
41. Doesn't appreciate the value of experience
42. Radical ideas
43. Arrives late to interview without calling ahead or without a valid excuse
44. Never heard of the company
45. Failure to express appreciation for the interviewer's time
46. Fails to ask questions about the potential job
47. High-pressure type
48. Gives indefinite responses to questions

The U.S. Department of Labor, through the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training (OASVET), established the national Veterans' Training Institute in 1986 to provide specialized training and professional skills enhancement of State Employment Service Agency and other veterans' service providers' staff.

To perform most efficiently, veterans' service specialists require specialized training; and State Employment Service Agencies' local job service office and other program management staff need more generalized training. The NVTI strives to meet both needs.

The NVTI basic training focuses on improving employment services for veterans through a professional skills-

development program. About 70 percent of participants are DVOP specialists and LVERs; the remaining participants are state employees and administrative staff, Federal employees and others involved with veterans' employment and training issues.

The NVTI training curriculum is designed to ensure that participants are trained in competencies that meet customers' needs. In addition to the basic employment and training professional-skills course, training is offered in veterans' benefits, transition assistance, case management, marketing and accessing the media, and management of veterans' services. NVTI also offers courses in veterans' reemployment rights case investigation and grants management, to address the training needs of the US Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) staff.

The University of Colorado-Denver operates the NVTI under a competitively awarded contract with VETS. Classes are delivered in a variety of modes, including residential weeks in Denver and selected locations around the country, and via distance learning approaches. The North Central Association of Colleges and Universities accredits NVTI courses; satisfactory course completion can earn participants 2 hours of academic credit per average 5-day course.

NVTI's administrative office in Denver houses the Resource and Technical Assistance Center (RTAC), a repository for a variety of materials and information resources on veterans' issues and serviced that offers on-going support for individuals who have completed NVTI training.

*For more info about the NVTI, contact the Veterans' Employment and Training Service representative nearest you, listed in the phone book under U.S. Government, Labor Department*



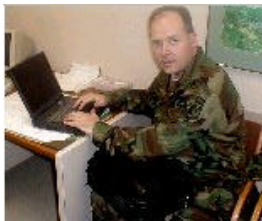
## **DANIEL COSTIGAN STAYS ON THE JOB** **WITH VA REHABILITATION AND MEDICAL SERVICES**

*By Robert Roundtree*

Daniel Costigan, a 52 year old, retired career Army Officer, requested VA Vocational Rehabilitation assistance to retain his current job as an ROTC instructor and military instructor at Minnesota State University at Mankato. VA responded by reviewing his unique vocational needs and developing a plan of service so Daniel could continue his employment while working from his home office or undergoing outpatient chemotherapy at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

Ed Keyser, VA Counseling Psychologist, met with Daniel and found him entitled based on his need for computer technology or equipment that would allow him to maintain his job by performing some of his job duties from a laptop computer at home or during his regularly scheduled VAMC visits. Daniel's employer was very supportive in accommodating his work

schedules for the medical treatments and allowing him to utilize computer technology to complete job assignments.



**Daniel Costigan working while at the VA Medical Center**

Recognizing the need to act quickly to assure the veteran had the technology to complete some work assignments while at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, Ed Keyser identified the appropriate computer equipment and authorized purchase. Daniel reports the computer technology provided by VA has made a "big difference in his ability to retain his job."

Daniel, who is rated a combined 80% for VA compensation purposes, met with us at one of his appointments at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. He demonstrated the use of his laptop computer and the access it provides to continue his work assignments while undergoing necessary medical treatment.

Daniel was very complimentary to the VA Vocational Rehabilitation Program for the technical assistance that allowed him to keep his job and the Minneapolis VA Medical Center for his healthcare. He stated it was a great combination and illustrates how the "One VA" concept works.

The VA staff commends Daniel for his work ethic and desire to maintain his career during intensive medical treatment. Congratulations, Dan! We look forward to seeing you at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

## **TWO NEW SYSTEMS SPEED UP VA SERVICES**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Veterans can now apply for benefits and health care online with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Two new systems will allow veterans quick, easy and secure access to apply for compensation, pension, rehabilitation benefits and health care.

"This is the first step toward an electronic VA," said Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs Hershel W. Gober. "We will use the best in the business world and the latest in the high technology sector to deliver world-class benefits and care to veterans. That's a promise."

To apply for health care, veterans can fill out and submit an Internet-based 10-10 EZ application available today for the first time nationwide.

Initially tested at 30 VA facilities, the 10-10 EZ is automatically e-mailed to the VA health care facility selected by the veteran. VA employees register the data, print the form and mail it back to the veteran for signature. Veterans can also print out the completed form and mail it to a VA health care facility themselves.

"Veterans On Line Applications" (VONAPP) is designed for veterans to

apply for compensation, pension, and vocational rehabilitation benefits through the Internet. Completed applications are sent electronically to the veteran's local VA office. Processing begins right away and veterans receive a response letting them know the status of their applications.

"Of course, security is of paramount importance," said Gober. "These forms are individually encrypted, ensuring the privacy of veteran's personal data. This is part of VA's approach to department-wide security planning and management."

Later this year, VA plans to offer education applications on the Internet. Currently, veterans attending school under the Montgomery GI Bill can make their monthly certification of enrollment at <http://www.gibill.va.gov>.

Along with 10-10 EZ and VONAPP, VA has redesigned its Web page. "When veterans access [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov), there will be no doubt that the focus

and content reflects the department's commitment to veterans," said Gober. "The new design makes it easy to find information, as well as online applications."

VA aims to eventually put all its health care and benefits applications online. However veterans are not required to apply online and can continue to use paper applications. To download other VA applications see <http://www.va.gov/forms>.

"Online applications, bar coding for medications, computerized record systems, telemedicine and in the near future -Smart Cards - are all examples of VA developing information technology on par, and often ahead of, the rest of the country," said Gober. "I'm really excited about what technology can do to allow us to do a better job in caring for the nation's veterans."

To access Internet applications: <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/>

SOURCE: Department of Veterans Affairs web page at <http://www.va.gov/pressrel/aponline.htm>

## **MINNEAPOLIS VA MEDICAL CENTER EMPLOYEE RECOGNIZED BY MINNESOTA SPIRIT**

*By RJ Roundtree*

Jay Newberry, Medical Benefits Clerk, Fee Basis, Minneapolis VA Medical Center, was recommended by Jerry Bacon, VA Counselor, for special recognition for his efforts in assisting Chapter 31 participants in obtaining appointments at VA health care facilities or by fee basis authorization. We visited Jay at his office at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center in November to recognize him for his efforts and "partnership."

Jay is an Army veteran who has been working for VA for almost 16 years. He started out at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center in admissions and later transferred to Fee Basis. Arlene Henke, Jay's supervisor, acknowledged his contributions and described examples of his efforts when

assisting disabled veterans who receive services requested by VA Counselors.



**Jay Newberry at the VAMC**

Jay is noted for his follow-up with clinics, vendors, and veterans to assure that services are scheduled or services authorized. His efforts are numerous illustrations of what customer service should and can be within "One VA."

Arlene and Jay both recommended that the best procedure Chapter 31 participants should follow is to always contact their VA Counselor first, obtain a

VA Form 28-8861, Request for Medical Services, and provide any requested documentation that would support their requests (medical reports, etc.). They strongly advise, veterans if they use private health care or emergency treatment, they need to sign a release of information or obtain copies of their medical reports or invoices that may be attached to the VA Form 28-8861 by the referring VA Counselor.

Based on our visit to the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, VA Counselors are very fortunate to have Jay Newberry on the front line of Chapter 31 referrals. Thanks, Jay. We look forward to continuing our working relationship and "partnership" for serving veterans with disabilities.

## **VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND VET CENTERS "PARTNER" TO SERVE VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES**

*By: RJ Roundtree*

The VA Vocational Rehabilitation & Counseling Division recently "teamed up" with the St. Paul Vet Center, 2480 University Avenue, St. Paul, to provide regularly scheduled office hours for intake, assessment, counseling, case management, and job placement. The VR&E Division began regular office hours each Friday in September 2000.



**Veterans Center**

The first three months of our joint "partner efforts" have resulted in obtaining new applications for Chapter 31 Vocational Rehabilitation benefits. In addition, veterans have been scheduled at this more convenient location based on their residence or nearest to their training facility.

VA Counselors have also benefited from the expertise of the Vet Center staff, including Psychologists, Social Workers, and Readjustment Counselors. In addition, the Minnesota WorkForce Center has a Disabled Veterans Outreach Person collocated at the Vet Center facility.

Vet Centers are community-based facilities that provide readjustment, chemical dependency and psychological assistance. Vet Centers may also

provide employment assistance, psychological services, and advocacy for veteran's issues. Readjustment counseling assists veterans in learning to cope with problematic military experiences. Chemical dependency counseling includes assessment and aftercare. Employment assistance involves job placement and advocacy for veteran employment. Psychological services include assessment, counseling, crisis intervention, and referral. Referrals may be made to VA medical centers and community based services.

The VA Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors look forward to a long and productive "partnership" with the St. Paul Vet Center. Thanks for allowing us to serve Minnesota's veterans at your location.